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FROM A SUMMER NOTEBOOK, 1909

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It occurs to me that a few notes which I have made on a recent visit to America may be of interest to the readers of the *School Review*. At first blush July and August may not seem to be the best months in which to extend one's acquaintance with matters relating to schooling on your side of the water, for the schools are closed. But on my previous visit, many years ago, I had realized there is much to be learned about education apart from visiting the buildings or sitting in classrooms during recitations; the important thing is to get at the school people, the men and women who are doing the work. And also is it not important, if you want to see an educational movement in its right perspective, to mix as much as possible with all and sundry?—to see children in their homes, to talk with neighbors in the smokeroom of a Pullman, or on the verandah of a hotel at a health resort?—in fact, to forget that you are a teacher on the hunt for new pedagogy, and just to let the situation and impression as they meet you produce their effect, and afterward get worked up into your mental store. The vacation is a good time for this sort of experience. I found people up in the White Mountains, or down by the beach at Nantucket (especially at Nantucket) in holiday mood, *au naturel*. Even at Chautauqua, dedicated all summer time to the sacred cause of literature and art, people were not overstrained with anxiety to discuss pedagogy. Now it appears to me a real help to a student of education to get at home in the country. He gets a more natural perspective from which to view the scene. But even for the more direct purpose of making acquaintance with teachers, this summer time is quite good. For since my last visit (in 1894) a wonderful change has taken place. The summer school has now established itself as one of your great educational resources.

Not only is it proving itself a more effective instrument than the institute for the general purpose of helping teachers to improve their efficiency, but it is serving a special purpose, which I am inclined to think is only half realized. It serves as a sort of clearing-house, a place of exchange for new ideas. During the autumn and winter, a teacher is pretty busy on his regular job—routine, conservatism, order are his watchwords: the machine must keep going, even if the higher functions of reforming thought cease to give an effective result. But when the long weeks of summer begin, after a week or two of apathy, the mind finds a new elasticity, and if at this juncture a number of teachers get together in a summer school, they are ready for new light; daring ideas no longer seem extravagant; inspiration comes; comrades from distant quarters are around to share one's hopes and fears.

Thus I can see that this universal period of vacation is proving a great intellectual boon to schoolmen (although I am by no means so sure that it is so good for the children). I notice, for example, the rapid way in which ideas relating to *industrial education* are extending. I spent a week at Hyannis, Mass., with some of the leaders in this movement. Apart from its summer school, Hyannis would scarcely count for so much, since the attendance in the winter sessions is necessarily small, but with the summer school of 300, many of whom come from distant parts, Principal Baldwin and his colleagues are able to take a prominent share in influencing the trend of thought.

And, for my part, after this experience, followed up by reading, and by inquiry at other summer schools, I think I have learned as much about what this industrial education amounts to as if I had come in the winter and watched the children at work.

The summer school fulfils another function, whose importance I scarcely realized until I came right up to it. One morning, I met a lady from Texas, then a principal from Alabama, next a teacher from Vermont and a professor from Oregon; at the delightful conference I had at Teachers College, New York, I suppose nearly every state in the Union was represented. Now this is surely a matter of quite the first importance. With-

out designing it, you secure an interchange of experience between different parts of this great country which is essential to progress. You have no unifying central authority such as the governments of Europe impose on all parts of a nation: hence the greater need for abundant exchange of ideas which shall prevent an excess of narrow provincialism in each state.

This reference to provincialism puts me in mind of another question which seemed to me, as I traveled about, to be of quite the first importance—the reliance you are placing upon the schools to develop in your immigrant population a genuine spirit of patriotism. All visitors from Europe who look into your schools echo the same opinion, that you are achieving a decisive result by infusing in stranger minds a new sentiment. The pride that you rightly feel in the marvelous expansion of the states is communicated at the earliest ages to these budding citizens and there are few signs that indicate among them any sighing for the fleshpots of Egypt. I am not sure whether your country is itself conscious of the extent to which this purpose has worked itself into the public mind as a definite educational end. As an illustration the use of the term “citizenship” may be cited. Fifteen years ago all the professional textbooks discoursed on the training of *character*, as the final aim in education; but now I find that you are constantly substituting this word “citizenship” and are speaking of citizenship as if it comprised the whole duty of man. In a sort of way you may regard this as exact, if you choose to include within the term “citizen” a man’s duties to religion, to his family, to his business; but this is really a perversion of terms. I am convinced that this language indicates a new attitude—an infection of the teacher and schools with a zeal, a cult for America and all things American, which found its origin in your special situation as regards the subject population and is now carried on by the force of its own momentum, very much as a similar cult laid hold of the schools of Germany in the seventies.

Now I am going to criticize, not the purpose of this cult, but the *method* of its pursuit. The child of any age up to 15 is not greatly interested in mighty, national affairs: he can be stirred

to violent superficial sentiment of an imitative sort, on any topic you please, by flag-waving and the singing of songs, but if the training is to be effective it needs intellectual support as well as color and sound. The intellectual interest in 49 United States with a wonderful president in a still more mysterious White House is too vague and shadowy. You tell each of the little boys that he may become president of the United States, but it can't mean much: there are not enough presidents to go round! Look into the minds and hearts of these little folk (and include their parents, too; father and mother are childish as well as their offspring). What a pathetic situation it is! They come to you, each with his memory full of local color, of race-passions, of a hamlet somewhere where he had toiled and loved and suffered, or of a city where, in spite of its filth and poverty, he had had a home. And all this, bad and good together, is swept away in the long and weary track over the ocean, which I am traversing as I write these lines. There comes to my mind a tragic passage from the gospel about "an unclean spirit that is gone out of a man." So it is; immigration banishes the old, though dark and evil, spirit that had made life so mean in those older lands which cast loose upon your shores their superfluous growth. And so when these people come to work for you, to live with you as brothers and sisters, you reform them; your climate, your opportunities and resources, above all, your schools, remodel their minds, and there they stand "empty, swept, and garnished." You effectually stamp out the old life; the old country is just that—the old country—and nothing more, a pathetic memory. Race-instincts are violently broken up, the cords that bind a man to the soil, the institution, the dialect of his tribe are rudely severed, and he stands there, and reflects, "Empty, swept, and garnished." And the melancholy gospel continues, "Then goeth he and taketh to himself seven other devils worse than the first, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Is there any truth in the analogy? I mean, does this ugly parable correspond to the facts of the psychology of immigration? If so, I doubt whether the emotional excitement of this vague cult of Americanism is adequate to meet the situation.

What these unhappy folk have lost is local color, local affections, matters of sight and sound which they held with personal affection. And although I cannot advance it as more than a speculation, I believe that you must replace that vacant chamber with something of the same sort. In other words, I would like to see a renewal of local interest—the teaching of local geography, local legends, local incidents. The facts of nature and of man within a ten-mile circuit of the home are the first things that should engage the interest of the young, whether they are of alien race or are American-born. In other words, local patriotism must come before national; the mayor of the city before the governor of the state; the local river and steamboat before the great Mississippi with its traffic.

But I am trespassing beyond the bounds I designed for this paper. Let me only add that a friend directed me to one locality where a most successful effort has been made to solve this problem. Springfield, Mass., should be proud to have so admirable a book as the one written by Mr. Barrows for his city. I should like to see such a book used in the schools of every city and county in your country. We are beginning a similar movement in England, but none of our local histories seems to me so excellent as this from Springfield.¹ Likely enough you have others published in other states but I have not come across them.

Another problem in which I found much that was instructive is concerned with the questions that I and others were discussing in earlier numbers of this *Review*, viz., corporate life in the high school. I met quite a number of principals of high schools at different times—from every part of the country; there was scarcely one, I think, who did not betray real anxiety as to the socio-moral conditions under which his work was conducted. And the same impression came to me from conversation with parents, superintendents, and others interested more on the fringe of high-school affairs.

¹ Chas. H. Barrows, *The History of Springfield, for the Young*. Springfield, Mass.: The Connecticut Valley Historical Society, 1909.

Here I am going to venture on a generalization—based partly on this visit, partly on what I had read and heard beforehand. I think your high school, your system of schooling for boys and girls between fourteen and eighteen, is the weakest feature of the entire national scheme of education. It was, therefore, a great delight to me to come across men of high moral purpose engaged in this field—one, I remember, from a southern city who is fighting gallantly to maintain a high moral standard of discipline in an ill-disciplined community: another in a small town of New England, displaying an intuition amounting to genius in making his academy a center of intellectual and moral union for all the families in his circle. If the spirit that animates these men can be widely infused; if your high-school teachers, men and women, can be led to realize the supreme importance of corporate life, of personal influence, then the problem will solve itself, not in our English way, although our English experience is worth while for comparison, but in a spirit which will accord with the triple demand: first, for a recognition of the special psychological needs of adolescence; second, for sympathy with the democratic freedom which, for good or evil, pervades American society; and finally (and this will follow without further effort), for a high, conscientious standard of attainment in every branch of study which the high school professes.

I am attempting nothing more than to note, as it were on the margin, some of the points that have remained in my recollection of these weeks of vacation. I will try, in conclusion, to put into words a still vaguer impression. I know no country, not even Scotland or Germany, where general opinion proclaims more loudly the value of schooling: further I constantly found parents anxious in the extreme to give their children a more advanced schooling than they have had themselves—and these were not exceptions, they are evidently the rule; East and West, and now also I gather in the South, the same eagerness to secure all that is going in education is witnessed. On the other hand, I am in doubt as to whether this desire to grasp education has not by a long way outrun an understanding of values. I mean

that the people, although they genuinely believe in schools and college training and are ready to pay for it, do not know what the genuine article is. Thus one sees great efforts to erect fine buildings, but I doubt if the same energy is applied to secure good teachers. I can see very little evidence that any body of public men has set itself to treat the question of securing the right article for this job, as a man of parts in a great factory sets out now-a-days to secure a capable set of workmen for his machinery. Suppose one regards the matter only from its lowest aspect, that of salary. If you compare the average pay of a teacher with that of a factory hand, or a lawyer, and then place your comparative table side by side with that of similar employment in European countries, I think the figures would show that the teacher (I do not differentiate as to sex) is being paid considerably less to the west of the Atlantic than to the east. It is not that you do not appreciate schooling; you believe that the children must be taught and that it is for their good to flock to the high schools and even after that to college; but you have not taken the next step, and made a business-like inquiry as to what this process involves in order that it shall answer its design. As a result, except in certain definite problems (such as that of the immigrant population to which I alluded above) I am not inclined to overestimate the effect of all this educational zeal, at the present day, upon the American people. Moltke, you will remember, told his nation after the Franco-German War, "*Der Schulmeister hat unsere Schlachten gewonnen*," and he was right: that is the kind of cause-and-effect relationship that I have in mind and that I fail to see at work in the United States. I may be obtuse, and perhaps the materials for a judgment fail me. But as I look at things, America appears to me, as regards education, to have extraordinary "faith" and to care little, in comparison, about the "works."

The nation is making extraordinary strides—most conspicuously, of course, in wealth, physical comfort, and the like; but quite as remarkable, one thinks, in the deeper things of life—new social adjustments, literary and artistic aspirations, religious introspections. Your life seems full of them. But they are

not the outcome of schooling. Of course you want the schools and colleges, but if they really thought about it, the American people would admit that these institutions are only a kind of waiting-room, to keep young people usefully occupied until the time comes to absorb the new generation in the hustle of real life.

I fear what I am now writing will be regarded in some quarters as dreadful heresy, but one is told that Americans² are not as sensitive to criticism as they used to be; and if anyone on first reading this paper feels offended at this opinion, I will ask for a second reading and hope that the presentation will not appear so offensive. For what it comes to is this: your nation is being made and remade most marvelously every decade; and it affords a most interesting sociological study to our age, because of the open light in which these rapid changes follow each other. These advances are the result partly of political freedom, partly of limitless natural resources, partly of the trials and strengthenings of character developed out of the racial problems and conflicts that you endure. These and other such influences have made the people what they are; but with all respect and admiration for the schools and the teachers, I cannot believe (apart from the exceptions alluded to) that schools and colleges have as yet played any vital part in the growth of the nation. But the enthusiasm is there, the faith is there, and to me the United States is, in the best sense of the word, the land of promise as regards this task of education. I have jotted down these notes while still my memory retains a vivid impression of an experience that has done much to help forward my own mind, much to reinforce one's own faith and hope: for over and above every other impression, there remains a delightful recollection of the buoyant vigor, the resilient cheerfulness of spirit displayed wherever one goes, by all who work in our field. What a prospect is afforded for the future of this mighty continent, which has so little in the past to regret, so much in the present to enjoy, and, in the future, worlds unknown to conquer!

² *Vide*, J. G. Brooks, *As Others See Us*. Macmillan, 1908.